

History of the Fall Creek Watershed



By Laura W. Johnson-Kelly, Town Historian, Town of Ithaca



Human occupation of NY state began after the glaciers retreated; the entire Fall Creek watershed was covered with ice during the last glacial maximum.



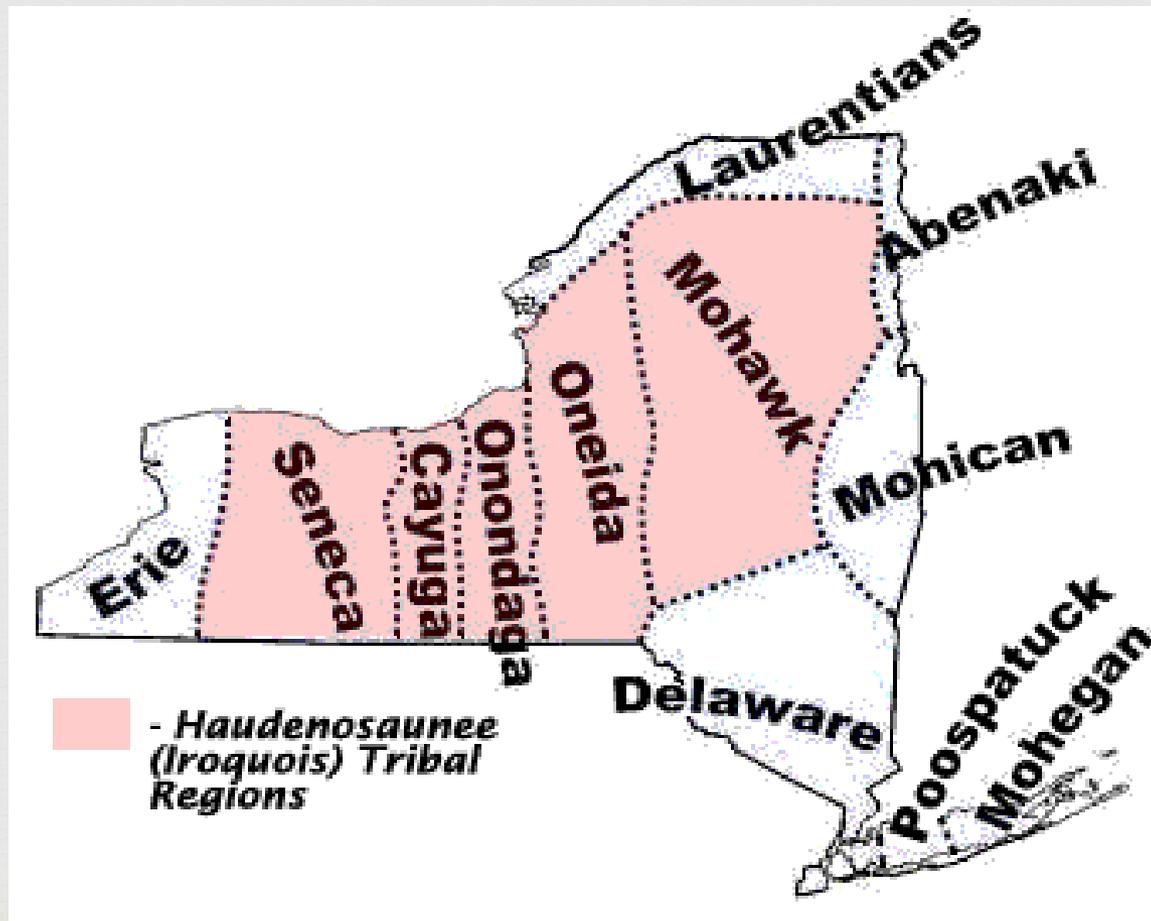
First Human Occupation: the Big Game Hunters

The Paleoindians had a profound effect on the local ecology, hunting the big game animals left in the wake of the glacier's retreat, like mastodons and mammoths, to extinction.

How did Native Americans impact waterways? Fishing weirs!



Native American Tribal Groups



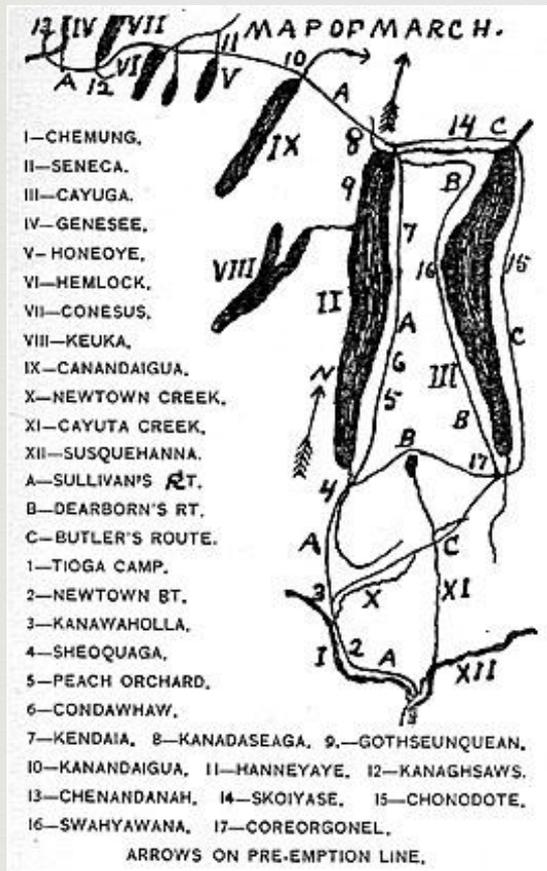
Agricultural Villages, Longhouses



- ❧ Slash-and-burn agriculture
- ❧ Villages had to move every 20 years or so when the local soils and natural resources were depleted



The 1779 Sullivan Campaign destroyed Native American settlements: Ithaca's Cayuga/Tutelo village Coreorgonel was obliterated.



Settlement by Euro-Americans



✧ Military tract land was given to soldiers who fought in the Revolutionary War. Many re-sold this land to early settlers while others settled the land themselves.

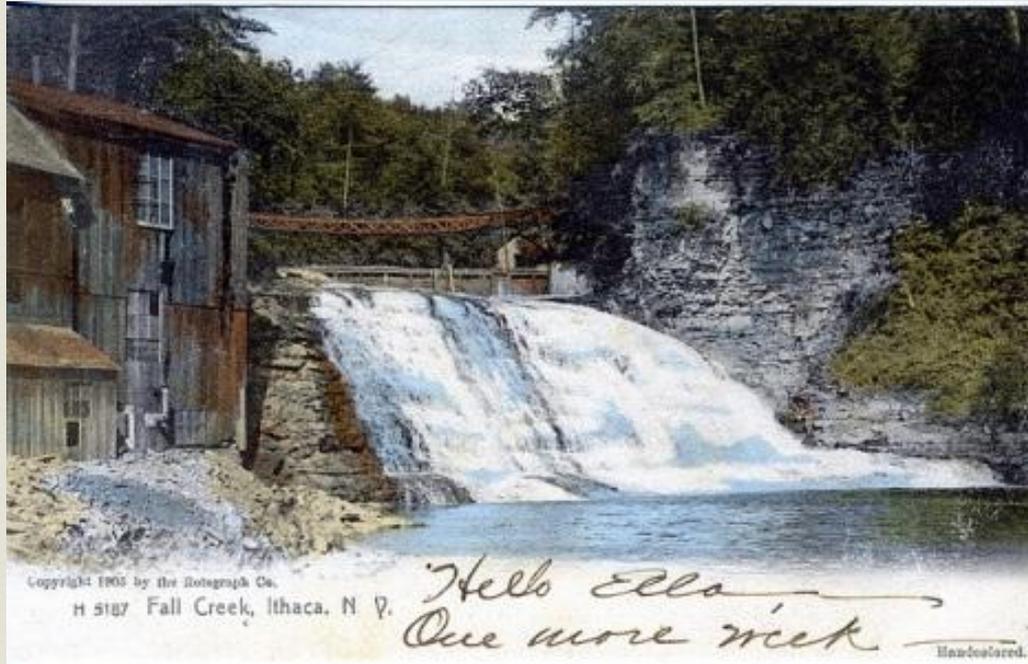
People cleared the land, profoundly altering the landscape and local ecology.



Farming, the Eight-Square Schoolhouse



Water-powered Industrial Development along Fall Creek

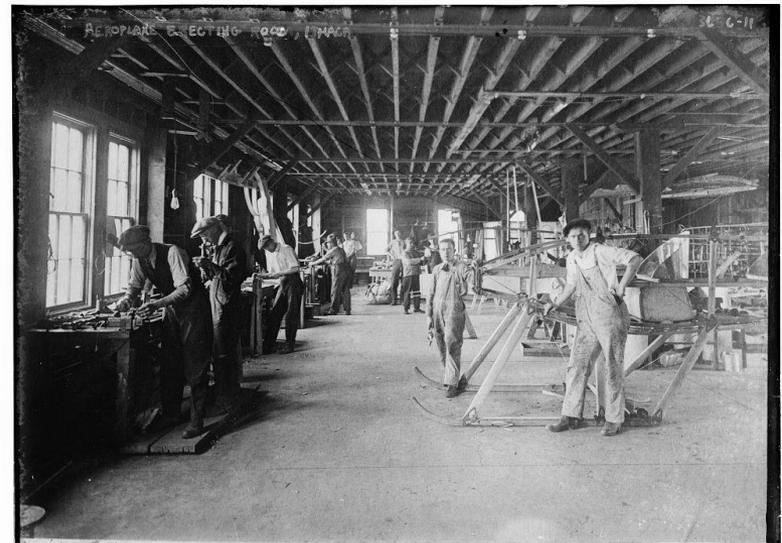


- By the mid-1800s, the hamlet of Free Hollow (now Forest Home) on Fall Creek had two grist mills, a sawmill, a turning shop, a wood-working mill, a paper mill, a woolen mill, a knitting mill, a foundry, a gun powder mill, a slaughter house, a tannery and leather shop, a cider mill, and a cabinet shop.

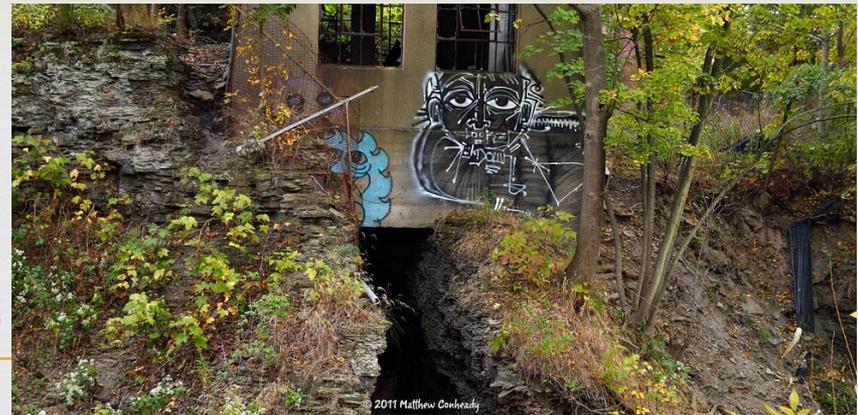
Grist Mill and Mill Stones



1915 Thomas Brothers Aeroplane Co.



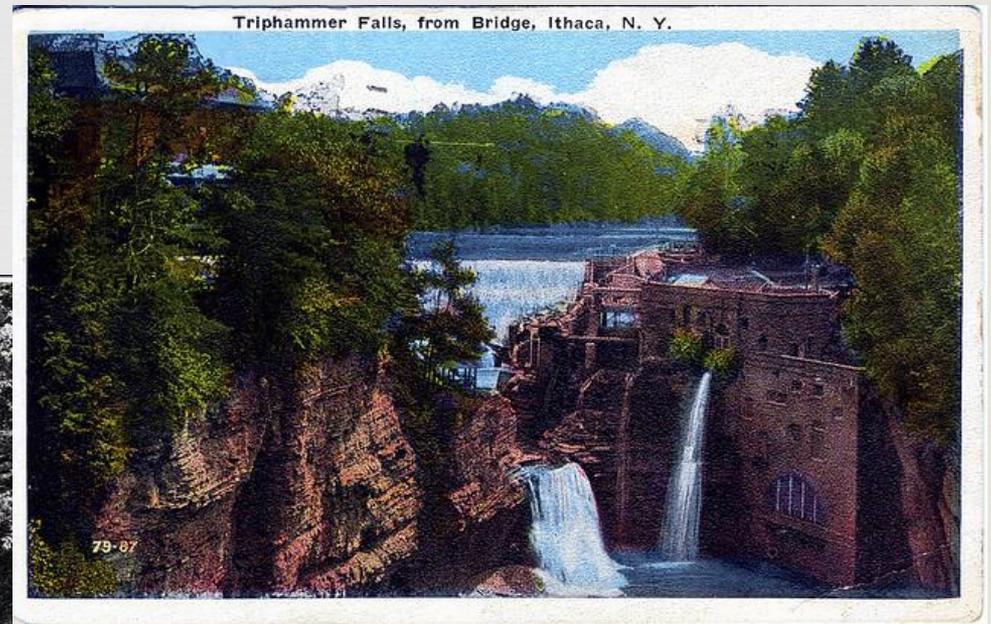
Ithaca Gun 1883-1987



Water power was essential in the 1800s,
but declined in importance after 1900.



Fall Creek Gorge and Old Power House, Ithaca, N. Y.



Triphammer Falls, from Bridge, Ithaca, N. Y.

Ruins of our water-powered past dot the sides of local creeks. . .



. . . and the waterways, too.



❧ Old dam visible in Fall Creek, Forest Home

Land Clearance Maximum circa 1900



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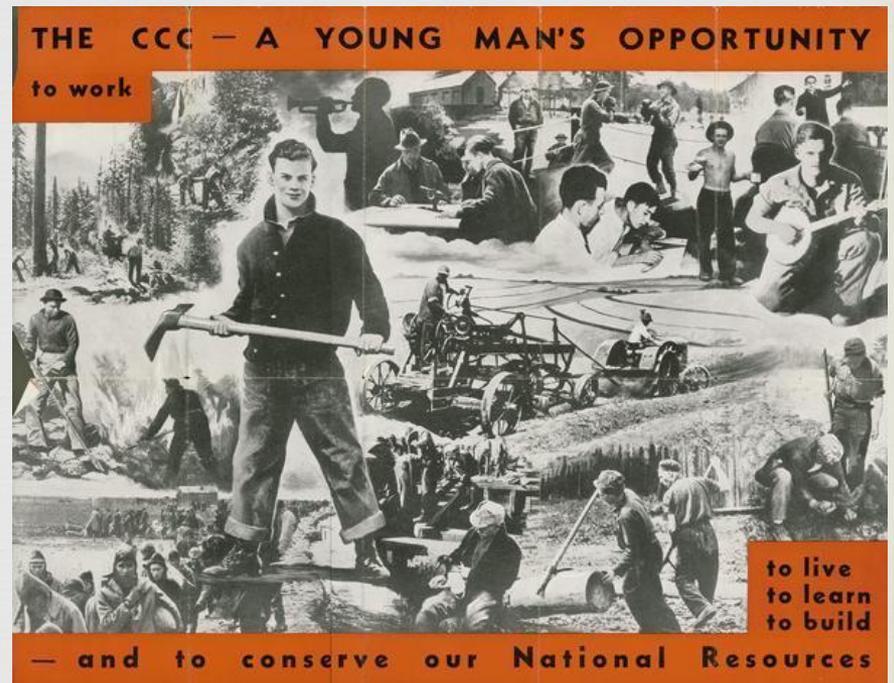
CORNELL.

Edward G. Wyckoff 91



4. The grand Wyckoff estate was completed about 1900. On the left the Gate Lodge is connected to greenhouses. On the right is the barn. Approached from Wait Ave., the white Colonial Revival style house was designed by William H. Miller. Wyckoff sold it to Phi Kappa Psi fraternity in 1915. It was demolished about 1964.

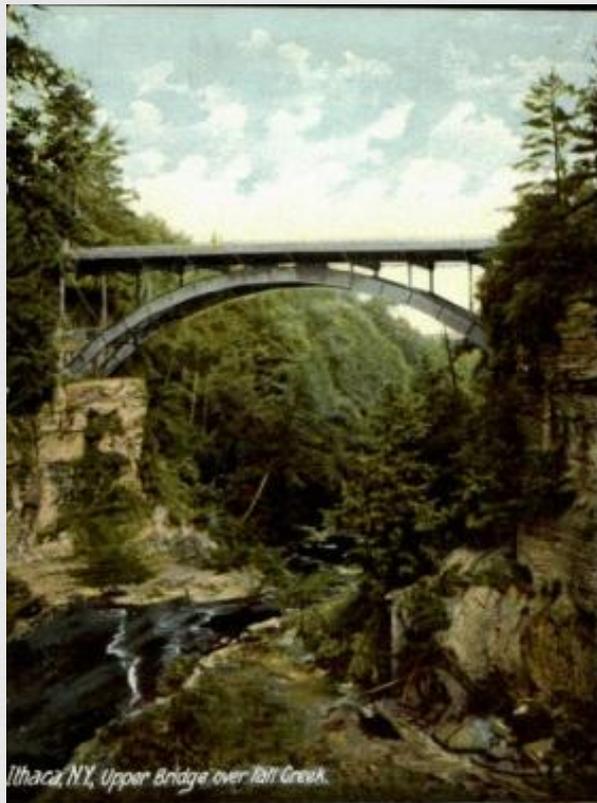
Reforestation



Mature pine plantation today

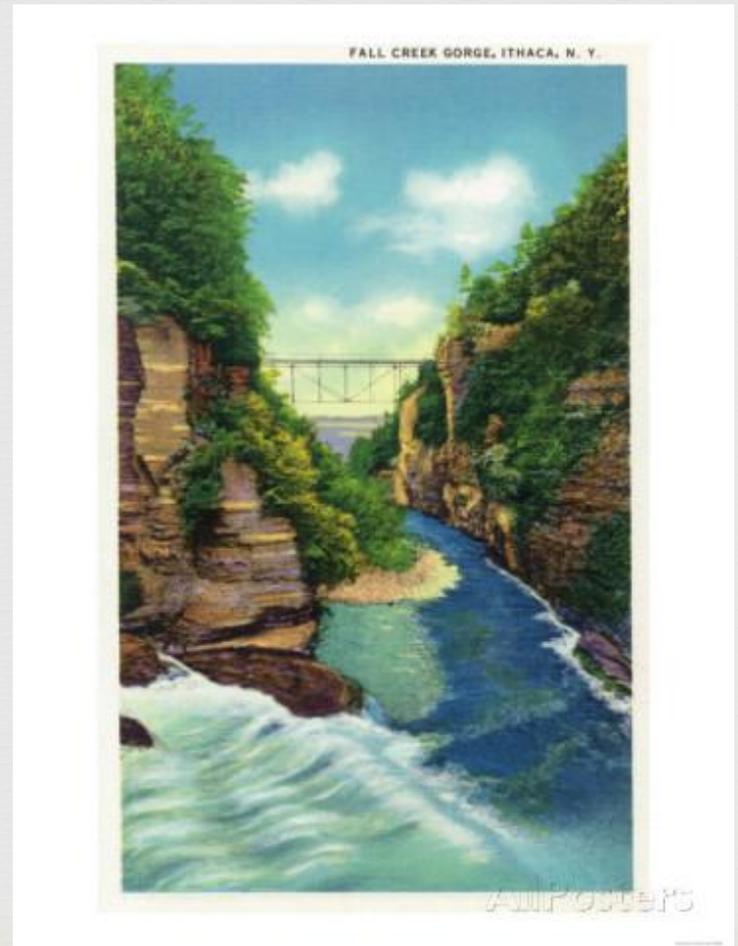


Historic images of Fall Creek



Ithaca, NY, Upper Bridge over Fall Creek.

CardCow.com



Amirosters

Thank you!



- ❧ A special thank you to Becky Sims for inviting me to speak to you today.
- ❧ If you have any questions or comments, I can be reached at Lwj1@cornell.edu.